

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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R 180448Z MAY 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 527
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIS, ECON, JA
SUBJECT: AFFECT ON HOKKAIDO OF JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY AGREE-
MENT OF APR 21, 1978

1. SUMMARY: THE JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY COOPERATION AGREE-
MENT SIGNED ON 4/21 REDUCED THE ZONE IN WHICH FISHING OF
SALMON WILL BE PERMITTED AND LOWERED JAPAN'S QUOTA IN THAT
ZONE TO 42,500 TONS OF SALMON. USING LOCAL SOURCES AND THE
1977 EXPERIENCE WITH SALMON QUOTA REDUCTION AS A GUIDE, IT
CAN BE SAID THAT, AFTER A VERY SHORT PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT,
THE AMOUNT OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN HOKKAIDO CAUSED BY THE AGREE-
MENT WILL BE LIMITED TO ABOUT 150 PEOPLE. THE ACTUAL
NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT CAUSED BY THE AGREEMENT WILL PRO-
BABLY ALSO BE LIMITED DUE TO COMPENSATION BY THE CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT. THUS, THE GREATEST FEAR OF THE HOKKAIDO
FISHING INDUSTRY IS NOT THE PRESENT AGREEMENT BUT THE PROS-
PECT OF BEING GRADUALLY SQUEEZED OUT OF FISHING IN THE
NORTH PACIFIC ENTIRELY. ANOTHER INDUSTRY WORRY IS THAT
UNCERTAINTY IN THE SALMON FISHING MAY EVENTUALLY LEAD TO
SALMON BEING PRICED OUT OF THE MARKET. POLITICALLY, THE
AGREEMENT INCREASES THE FRUSTRATION OF AREA FISHERMEN WITH
SOVIET HARD LINE POLICIES ON MANY ISSUES. THIS FRUSTRA-
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TION, TOGETHER WITH THE NEED FOR COMPENSATION CEMENTS THE
SUPPORT OF FISHERMEN FOR THE LDP. END SUMMARY

2. NUMBER OF BOATS AFFECTED: AS A RESULT OF THE REDUCED
QUOTA, THE GOVERNMENT IS CALLING FOR A 30 PERCENT REDUC-
TION IN THE NUMBER OF SALMON FISHING BOATS. HOKKAIDO
SOURCES INDICATE THAT, OUT OF THE 86 CATCHER BOATS

ATTACHED TO MOTHER SHIPS (WITH CREWS OF ABOUT 20 TO 25 PEOPLE), 26 WILL BE REDUCED, AND THAT AN ADDITIONAL 46 DRIFT-NET CATCHER BOATS (WITH CREWS OF ABOUT 20 PEOPLE) WILL BE REDUCED. THIS IS CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN LAST YEAR'S REDUCTIONS IN THESE CATEGORIES. HOWEVER, SMALL DRIFT-NET CATCHER BOATS, (WITH CREWS OF ABOUT 5 PEOPLE), WHICH SUSTAINED THE GREATEST REDUCTIONS LAST YEAR, WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE '78 AGREEMENT. HOKKAIDO HAS ONLY ONE OF JAPAN'S SIX SALMON FISHING MOTHER BOATS, AND THIS WILL NOT BE AFFECTED.

3. NUMBER OF WORKERS TO BE AFFECTED: THE HOKKAIDO GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES THAT THERE ARE 10,700 SALMON FISHERMEN IN HOKKAIDO AND THAT 2,300 (30 PCT) OF THEM WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE FISHERIES AGREEMENT. OF THIS NUMBER, ABOUT 1,000 WILL CONTINUE TO BE EMPLOYED BY THE SAME COMPANY BUT IN ANOTHER TYPE OF FISHING; 1,000 WILL LOSE THEIR JOBS BUT WILL SOON BE REHIRED AS FISHERMEN BY OTHER COMPANIES; AND 300 WILL BECOME UNEMPLOYED. ABOUT 50 PCT OF THESE 300 WILL RETURN TO HOMES, AND POSSIBLY JOBS, IN HONSHU, LEAVING ABOUT 150 PEOPLE IN HOKKAIDO WHO WILL LOSE THEIR JOBS AS FISHERMEN DUE TO THE AGREEMENT. THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO LOSE JOBS IN SALMON PROCESSING WILL BE NEGLIGIBLE AS FACTORIES WILL MAINTAIN PRODUCTION WITH OTHER KINDS OF FISH OR IMPORTED SALMON.

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4. COMPENSATION: AFTER THE '77 22.5 PCT REDUCTION IN THE SALMON QUOTA, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SPONSORED TWO TYPES OF COMPENSATION PROGRAMS. THE FIRST WAS DIRECT COMPENSATION TO THE OWNERS WHO ABANDONED SALMON FISHING. THIS AMOUNTED TO 9.7 BILLION YEN IN TOTAL. THE SECOND FORM OF COMPENSATION WAS A TOTAL OF 17.15 BILLION YEN IN LOANS TO OWNERS WHO CONTINUED FISHING. UNDER THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF THE FISHING ASSOCIATION THOSE WHO CONTINUED FISHING USED THE LOANS TO COMPENSATE THOSE WHO REFRAINED FROM SALMON FISHING. IN TURN, THE OWNERS WHO DID NOT FISH USED THEIR COMPENSATION MONEY TO COVER THEIR EXPENSES, INCLUDING PAY FOR ALREADY RECRUITED CREW MEMBERS, AND A REASONABLE PROFIT.

5. THIS YEAR, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS ARGUING THAT IT CANNOT LAVISHLY SUPPORT AN INDUSTRY THAT, DUE TO THE CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL FISHING REGULATIONS, WILL CONTINUE TO BE SERIOUSLY OVEREXTENDED. THE HOKKAIDO FISHERY ASSN, HOWEVER, IS INSISTING ON FULL COMPENSATION ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS ONLY NECESSARY TO RETRENCH BECAUSE OF THE TREATIES WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEGOTIATED. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT LEGALLY FORCE A REDUCTION IN THE SALMON CATCH, IT MUST REACH SOME COMPROMISE WITH THE FISHERIES

ASSN, BUT IT IS NOT NOW POSSIBLE TO ESTIMATE THE FINAL
AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE
AGREEMENT WILL BE LIMITED, IT HAS BEEN NEGATIVELY RECEIVED
BY LOCAL FISHING GROUPS AND GOVERNMENTS. THIS IS PARTIALLY
DUE TO A FEAR THAT FUTURE FISHING AGREEMENTS WILL
COMPLETELY BAN JAPANESE SALMON FISHING IN THE NORTH
PACIFIC. MINISTER NAKAGAWA'S STATEMENT THAT THE '78
AGREEMENT GUARANTEED JAPANESE ACCESS TO NORTH PACIFIC SAL-
MON FOR FIVE YEARS DID LITTLE TO ALLAY THIS FEAR SINCE SUCH

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A GUARANTEE WAS NOT IN THE AGREEMENT TEXT.

7. THE AGREEMENT HAS PREDICTABLY HEIGHTENED THE ANTI-
SOVIET FEELING OF FISHERMEN. THERE IS GROWING FRUSTRATION
OVER THE CONTINUAL HARD LINE ATTITUDE OF THE USSR ON ALL
FISHING ISSUES AND THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES PROBLEM. HOW-
EVER, THE IDEA THAT A PARTY OTHER THAN THE LDP COULD
ACHIEVE A MORE BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR, DOES
NOT SEEM TO BE GAINING ANY GROUND. INDEED, AS LONG AS A
"PROPER" DEGREE OF COMPENSATION CAN BE AGREED UPON, THE
SOVIETS' HARD LINE APPROACH ONLY SEEMS TO SOLIDIFY FISHER-
MEN'S SUPPORT FOR THE LDP.

8. ANOTHER SALMON INDUSTRY WORRY STEMMING FROM THE AGREE-
MENT IS THAT CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY OVER SUPPLY MAY BRING
PRICE INCREASES AND DEPRESS THE DEMAND FOR SALMON. IN '77
SALMON SUPPLY UNCERTAINTY LED TO HOARDING WHICH WAS THE
MAJOR CAUSE OF THE 39.1 PCT SALMON PRICE INCREASE THAT

YEAR. CONSUMERS ARE EXPECTED TO SWITCH TO LESS EXPENSIVE
FISH IF THE PRICE OF SALMON KEEPS RISING. END COMMENT.
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